

PENNSYLVANIA.

MEMORIAL

OF

A CONVENTION HELD AT HARRISBURG,

*In favor of a restoration of the Public Deposites to the United States Bank.*

JUNE 26, 1834.

Read, and laid upon the table.

*To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled :*

A numerous body of the citizens of Pennsylvania, assembled at the seat of their State Government, ask leave respectfully to offer their memorial to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States. In assembling together and adopting the present measure, they are obeying the instructions, and uttering the voice of their suffering fellow-citizens of every section of this wide-spread commonwealth. Out of twenty-five congressional districts, twenty-four are represented in the convention. The fulness of the representation may be judged of by the numbers of your memorialists, who have left their occupations and their homes at a moment when, in consequence of the distress which pervades every part of the State, a departure from either is attended with peculiar inconveniences and embarrassment. They have yielded, however, to the commands of their friends and neighbors without regret for any personal sacrifices, and they have met together to confer upon the grievances which are endured, and to devise, if possible, the means of alleviating them. Your honorable bodies are not now to learn the distressed condition of any portion of the country. It is long since we have seen recorded in your journals the receipt of petitions from more than a hundred thousand citizens, all uniting in one mournful, but unquestionable story, of suspended wages, lost credit, increasing wants, and diminished means to supply them—which have left their deep, and perhaps indelible impression in every portion of a heretofore prosperous and smiling land. These communications, springing, as they have done, from various quarters, and dictated by no concert or co-operation, except that which flows spontaneously from a common state of calamity, your memorialists have now the painful opportunity to confirm. They have brought together the disastrous tidings which have been collected in each distant section of the commonwealth; they have opened to each other freely their swelling hearts; and they have sought in vain for one

mitigating circumstance, in possession or in prospect, for one exaggerated representation or distorted fact in the numerous exhibitions of deep-felt suffering which have been made to Congress, and they have found only aggravation in the conviction that the suffering has been altogether unnecessary and unmerited. As Pennsylvanians, your memorialists contemplate with anguish the neglect or destruction of unlimited resources, which are now worse than thrown away. The cherished policy of the State, consisting of an encouragement of her manufactures, has become impracticable and delusive—for there is no longer a market for the sale of them, or a reasonable probability of being paid for them if they could be sold. The consequence is, that numerous establishments of that description are actually closed, and others remain in partial operation, with crippled strength, performing but a fraction of their accustomed labor, and struggling, even in that feeble and imperfect condition, not in the belief that any return of profit can be realized, but clinging to the possibly delusive hope that infatuation itself must one day or other be brought to perceive and to abandon the error of its ways.

Your memorialists do not mean to dwell for a moment upon the loss sustained by the proprietors, severe and afflicting as it is, unjustly and tyrannically as it has been decreed. They are able, in many instances, to stand up against the shock beyond the reach of utter ruin, and they are awaiting, in such cases, with becoming fortitude, the return of better times. Pennsylvania happily rests upon resources which the rudest storm cannot in a moment sweep away. But your memorialists anxiously desire to communicate to your honorable bodies some portion of the feeling with which they are animated for a large class of laboring poor, whose daily bread depends upon the constancy of their employments and the certainty of their reward. In the city of Pittsburg and its immediate vicinity, two-thirds of a population of thirty thousand inhabitants owe their livelihood to manufactures. The suspension of the forge and the loom, which has now occurred, debars a large portion of this vast mass of human activity and strength from occupation, and, consequently, from support; and many of them must be cast out to starve, unless a Providence, juster and more benignant than their rulers, protects them in their day of need.

The staples of the commonwealth are without a market. Many of its once flourishing mines are in a great degree abandoned, and their miners are generally dispersed. Iron and cotton are no longer manufactured to the extent of more than two-thirds of their former produce. Lumber, if it sells at all, sells at greatly diminished prices. Four out of five of the furnaces of an extensive glass-house at Kensington are extinguished, and the fifth is kept in blast chiefly that the numerous apprentices may continue to enjoy the means of instruction and beneficial exercise. If flour retains its price, it is owing to the additional calamity of its scarcity, in consequence of which the supply has been reduced in proportion to the demand. Turn where we will, your memorialists perceive one universal sense of present or impending ruin, depressing the energies and darkening the prospects of the citizen.

It is scarcely necessary, at this time, to trace these deeply seated and wide-spread mischiefs to their source. Under a solemn sense, however, of the responsibility which we owe to our constituents and to your honorable bodies, we do not hesitate to confirm the imputation which has been so often communicated to Congress. Until a series of measures on the

part of the Executive of the Union, hostile to the best interests of Pennsylvania, were consummated by the last fatal blow aimed at the Bank of the United States in the removal of the deposits to the custody of other institutions, all was prosperous and marked with plenty. The energies of our commonwealth, and, as we believe, of the whole nation, became palsied from that hour. Your memorialists must therefore ascribe the sufferings to which they have adverted to that ill-advised measure, consequent, as it were, upon, or connected with, a system of hostility pursued towards the National Bank. The measure would probably have been sufficiently disastrous of itself; but when it bore every appearance of being united with a stern and unrelenting disposition to break down the barriers of the constitution, it was fraught with ruin to the brightest hopes of the nation.

As other memorialists have been denied access to the Executive, we cannot hope for succor from the quarter where we should otherwise most naturally have looked for it: to which we have undoubtedly ascribed the sufferings of our constituents. We therefore make an appeal directly to the Legislature. We approach your honorable bodies with the deference and respect that are due from citizens to the representatives of the sovereignty of the American people, but with the firmness and independence of freemen suffering under the weight of accumulated wrongs, conscious of the purity of our motives and the righteousness of our cause. We are no less representatives of the people than yourselves; selected, indeed, at the moment of suffering, without the reproach of having in any degree contributed to it, and, unhappily, without the means of extending relief. We approach you under the deepest conviction that it is fully within your power to redress the evils of our common country, and that it is your most sacred duty to put forth your arm and exercise that power. We rest upon the right which is guaranteed to us by the constitution, to remonstrate against grievances where complaint must lawfully be heard—to demand relief where alone it may be found.

We believe, and so communicate to you, that the measure especially complained of was in direct violation of the constitution. That that constitution gives to the Executive no sort of control over the treasure of the nation. That, in assuming such unauthorized control, an act has been committed of lawless usurpation and high-handed tyranny; and that the co-ordinate branch of the Government, whose peculiar rights have been invaded, owes it to the nation and itself effectually to vindicate them. We believe, moreover, and we assert with confidence, which the constitution and the cause inspire, that, should the Legislature deny the redress we call for, and refuse to rescue the bleeding country from the effects of wounds thus wantonly inflicted, it will participate in the exercise of arbitrary power.

Could your memorialists discover, for the act complained of, one feeble pretence in law or in reason, they would summon to their assistance the best consolations of patriotism, and patiently abide by the redress which the elective power may afford. But when they are referred to no authority, and are informed of no danger, to justify and excuse the act; and when they are told that their constituents are to be involved in ruin; that the constitution of their country is to be invaded; that the best hopes of a happy people are to be blasted for the sake of an experiment; and when that experiment has done its office, and has proved itself to be altogether disastrous, they cannot, because they ought not, to delay to throw them-

selves upon Congress for ample and immediate relief. Should it be delayed one single hour, distress will be greatly aggravated. Should Congress rise without specific measures to carry the balm of consolation to the hearts of your desponding countrymen, the extent of the calamity it would be impossible to foretell.

The representatives of Pennsylvania are especially called on to listen to the mournful voice of their suffering fellow-citizens. They will not, surely, turn a deaf ear to the cry of supplication speaking from so many thousand tongues. If they can, let them listen to the voice of warning. This convention is composed of two hundred and fifty members, of whom two hundred and eight have been in actual attendance; of the whole number, no less than seventy-five have heretofore been friends and supporters of the Chief Magistrate whose acts have plunged the nation into deep calamity. They have deemed it due to their love of country to hold fast by the constitution through evil and through good report; and when a President, to whom they have been ardently attached, forgets the tie, infinitely stronger than the strongest tie of personal devotion, that ought to bind him to his country and her laws, they deem it equally their duty to cast him off forever.

Your memorialists are well assured that a single act of Congress calculated to give renewed confidence in our institutions, and to ensure to them respect and obedience hereafter, would at once arrest the progress of distress, and restore the happiness of the people. The violation of the constitution, like the sudden blast of death, filled the whole nation with dismay. The application by Congress of the remedy which is completely within their power, will dispel with magic influence the shades which now envelop the country. Your memorialists confidently believe that the restoration of the deposits to their only proper depository, or an unequivocal act disapproving of their removal, or an act rechartering the Bank of the United States, or any act which shall effectually restrain the Executive from carrying on hostilities against the policy of Congress and the peace and welfare of the country, would afford relief, the want of which is so sorely felt, and the possession of which is so anxiously required. And they respectfully pray that one or all of such may be passed.